

MALACHI: CALL TO OVERCOME SPIRITUAL APATHY
IV: Overcoming Unfaithfulness In Marital Relationships
(Malachi 2:10-16)

I. Introduction

- A. About 100 years after the Hebrew exiles had returned from Babylon and rebuilt Jerusalem and the temple, their “initial enthusiasm had worn off,” with life and worship becoming mere routines. (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, “Introduction to the Book of Malachi: The Times,” p. 1325)
- B. God raised up Malachi to call the people to repentance from spiritual apathy, and Malachi 2:10-16 addressed the issue of unfaithfulness in marital relationships in Israel. We view the passage for our application:

II. Overcoming Unfaithfulness In Marital Relationships, Malachi 2:10-16.

- A. God called Israel to repent of her unfaithfulness in practicing mixed marriages with pagans, Malachi 2:10-12:
 - 1. The Lord was Israel’s Father in the sense that He was her only God, so Israel had only one spiritual Father as she had one God, but Israel’s people had “dealt treacherously” (KJV), or “acted unfaithfully with respect to a prior agreement or covenant” (*bagad*) by her actions with one another in profaning their covenant with God, Malachi 2:10; Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 1580.
 - 2. The sin that violated this covenant was that of the people marrying pagan wives who worshipped pagan gods in violation of the Mosaic Law and thus opening the people of Israel up to departing from the Lord and turning to idols, Malachi 2:11 with Deuteronomy 7:3-4.
 - 3. God declared that he would cause anyone in Israel who practiced mixed marriages with pagan women to be “cut off,” meaning “either that man would die or that his line would cease and he would have no descendants in Israel,” Malachi 2:12; Ibid., p. 1580-1581.
- B. God called Israel to repent of her unfaithfulness in marriages to each other by way of divorce, Mal. 2:13-16:
 - 1. The Lord then complained that men were bringing their offerings to Him but that He did not receive them, so these men wept and wondered why God did not accept their offerings, Malachi 2:13-14a.
 - 2. The Lord explained that He was a Witness between these men and the wives of their youth with whom they had broken faith, “that is, whom” they “had divorced,” Mal. 2:14b. God had been a Witness “of the marriage covenant between the man and woman,” and some of these men had likely divorced their initial Hebrew wives to take foreign wives, explaining why these two sins are addressed together in this chapter!
 - 3. In Malachi 2:15a, Malachi declared that God had made the initial marital couple one in flesh and in spirit, a reference to the divine institution of marriage in Genesis 2:24. (Jesus also referred to Genesis 2:24 as God’s pattern for marriage to be a permanent institution, thus outlawing divorce, Matthew 19:4-6.)
 - 4. God’s purpose in making marriage a permanent institution was that His people might produce a godly seed, what occurs only if marriage is permanent so children are not only born into their birth parents’ home but are also raised to be God-fearing, God-worshiping people, Mal. 2:15b. The decision to divorce one’s Hebrew wife to remarry a pagan woman countered this divine purpose, and it angered the Lord!
 - 5. Malachi 2:15c thus warned the men of Israel to take heed to their spirit, that none of them deal unfaithfully with the Hebrew wife of his youth by divorcing her.
 - 6. After all, God as the Lord and God of Israel said, “I hate divorce,” Malachi 2:16a; Ibid., Ryrie, fn. to Malachi 2:16. The reference to one’s covering himself with violence describes violating the marriage relationship with divorce, for marriage was symbolized by a “man’s covering himself with his garment” (Ruth 3:9; Ezekiel 16:8), making divorce an act of violence, Malachi 2:16b; Ibid., B. K. C., O. T., p. 1582.
 - 7. God thus directed Israel’s people to take heed to their spirit that they not deal unfaithfully in their covenant with their marriage partner before the Lord, Malachi 2:16c.

Lesson: *God urged Israel’s men to overcome their unfaithfulness to Him of marrying pagan wives that would lead them into idolatry, and He urged these men to overcome their unfaithfulness to their original Hebrew wives where they broke their marital covenant with them by the violence of divorce that God hated that they might remarry pagan women. God wanted Israel to rear godly children, what required permanent marriages of godly couples.*

Application: *(1) May we recall that God hates divorce, that He views it as a violent act, that we then stay faithfully wed to our marriage partner, cf. 1 Corinthians 7:10-11. (2) May we realize the value of marital faithfulness in rearing godly children, for godly children are not only procreated by a man and a woman, but they are also reared to follow the Lord in a home where their mother and father stay permanently devoted in marriage to one another!*